

Letter to Dr Emma Haddad, Chief Executive, St Mungo's, about the indefinite strike by staff

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Dr Emma Haddad
Chief Executive, St Mungo's
3 Thomas More Square
London E1W 1YW

8 August 2023

Dear Emma,

Re: Indefinite strike by St Mungo's staff

I recently spoke with someone who works at St Mungo's for a council commissioned service regarding the indefinite strike by staff across England, including in London, Brighton and Oxford, over pay rises relating to 2021-22.

They told me that: "we feel like we have been forced to take this action because our pay is falling year on year and it is having a massive negative effect on the sector and those we work with. We need people with experience and commitment, but currently people with years of valuable knowledge are leaving the homelessness sector because pay is falling in real terms and people can't afford to stay in this work."

I am very worried that this industrial dispute has escalated from a month-long strike to an indefinite one, with the consequent impact on the services St Mungo's provides to people experiencing homelessness in England.

I understand that the strike has been extended due to Unite union workers refusing an increased pay offer of 3.7 per cent (higher than the previous offer of 2.25 per cent). This rise is still far from sufficient for your workers, given that inflation has only just come down to 7.9 per cent from a peak of 11.1 per cent last year, while food inflation is still running at 17.3 per cent, having reached a 45-year high in March of 19.1 per cent.

At the same time, the Mayor of London is predicting that private rents in London could climb to more than £2,700 per month next year, while recent rate hikes by the Bank of England have taken the base rate to 5.5 per cent with subsequent effect on mortgage payments for homeowners.[1]

While it is not within my remit to take part in your negotiations with staff, as a London-wide Assembly Member concerned with the rising cost of living as well as the wider housing and homelessness crisis, I know how important it is that effective support and advocacy from organisations like yours is maintained. Therefore, I urge you to speak further with union representatives and aim to improve your offer to workers.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Sian Berry

Green Party Member of the London Assembly

[1] Mayor's longstanding call for rent controls more urgent than ever as private rents in London forecast to surpass £2,700 per month next year, 3 Aug 2023, <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayors-longstanding-call-rent-controls-more-urgent-ever-private-rents-london-forecast-surpass-ps2700>

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